

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5355

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS

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SUBJ: EC FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL, MARCH 7, 1978:

HIGHLIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: SEPTELS REPORT ON MARCH 7 EC FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS ON LDC DEBT RELIEF, US/EURATOM RELATIONS, EC/JAPAN TRADE RELATIONS, GREEK ACCESSION, THE MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS, THE EC STEEL SITUATION, CIEC SPECIAL ACTION, THE EC/PRC TRADE AGREEMENT, EC SHIPBUILDING, AND EC/CYPRUS AGRICULTURAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS. POLITICAL COOPERATION DISCUSSIONS HELD ON THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL MEETING ARE ALSO REPORTED SEPTEL. OTHER ISSUES DISCUSSED DURING THE COUNCIL MEETING ARE HIGHLIGHTED BELOW. END SUMMARY.

2. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DIRECT ELECTIONS:

ACCORDING TO PERMREP OFFICIALS, THE MINISTERS ENDORSED UNCLASSIFIED

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TWO ALTERNATIVE SETS OF DATES IN 1979 (MAY 17-20 AND JUNE 7-10), TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE APRIL 7-8 EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR A DECISION ON A DATE FOR THE FIRST EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DIRECT ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, SEVERAL MINISTERS (INCLUDING DANISH FOREIGN MINISTER ANDERSEN - COUNCIL PRESIDENT) TOLD REPORTERS AFTER THE MEETING THAT THERE IS NOW SOME QUESTION AS TO WHETHER A DATE CAN LEGALLY BE

SET IN ADVANCE OF COMPLETION OF ALL NECESSARY MEMBER STATE RATIFICATION AND ELECTORAL LEGISLATION PROVIDING FOR DIRECT ELECTIONS; THEY IMPLIED THAT THE DECISION MIGHT HAVE TO BE POSTPONED BEYOND THE APRIL SUMMIT. UK FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE FRENCH, IN PARTICULAR, ARE RELUCTANT TO SET A DATE THAT THE NINE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO KEEP, BUT HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT THE APRIL SUMMIT WILL PRODUCE A DECISION. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE UK DIRECT ELECTIONS BILL SHOULD NOT PROVE TO BE AN OBSTACLE IN THIS REGARD, ADDING THAT THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BEGAN MARCH 7.

3. EUROPEAN COUNCIL AGENDA:

ACCORDING TO PERMREP OFFICIALS, THE COUNCIL REACHED GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THE AGENDA FOR THE APRIL 7-8 EUROPEAN COUNCIL. IN ADDITION TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DIRECT ELECTIONS (PARA 2 ABOVE), THE AGENDA TENTATIVELY INCLUDES TRADE RELATIONS WITH JAPAN, THE GENERAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION, ESTABLISHMENT OF A EUROPEAN FOUNDATION (USIS/USEC FIELD MESSAGE NO. 21 OF 12/20/77), AND POLITICAL COOPERATION. FINAL APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA WILL BE MADE AT THE APRIL 4 FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL. IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER O'KENNEDY TOLD REPORTERS THAT HIS GOVERNMENT ALSO WANTS THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL TO ENGAGE IN A DISCUSSION OF EC REGIONAL POLICY "IN ITS BROADEST SENSE".
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4. EXTERNAL FISHERY ISSUES:

PENDING THE CONCLUSION OF CONSULTATIONS WITH NORWAY, SWEDEN, AND THE FAROE ISLANDS ON RECIPROCAL FISHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR 1978, THE COUNCIL AGREED ON INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR THOSE COUNTRIES FOR THE PERIOD UNTIL APRIL 15. HINTON

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